3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

292
415
202

A PROHIBITIONIST.

When road runs low, it is the duty of the chief to prevent undue consumption. The man in the picture has been sent out to prohibit the cooking of bananas before a fixed date. He is wearing bronze bracelets and calabashes. Note razor for carving a wooden stool and a tomahawk.

[FACING p. 272]

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17



that the organisation of Mbande may be described either as a group of small fiefs clustered together or as the capital chiefdom of the Kyungu, in which the nobles of Ngonde acted as the great commoners, each in two small age-villages. 642 565

Besides the nobles of Ngonde and their own followers there lived at Mbande men called **nalubuta**, who acted as the personal messengers and police of the Kyungu. They were not hereditary officials but chosen for their speed by the nobles of Ngonde, who also gave them their orders. Anyone might become a messenger, the son of a chief, or of a commoner, or even a slave. 624 202

Of the customs of the hill fiefs and of the chiefdom, of the houses of Nyondo and Kameme we know very little; but it is certain that in many of them different dialects were spoken from that of the plain and that their inhabitants called themselves (as they still do to-day) Sukwa, Wenya, Lambya, and so on, rather than "men of Ngonde." And these upland groups were much more loosely attached[1] to the central power at Mbande than were the people of the plain. 642 565

There is some evidence to show that, even in the early period, the the nobles of Ngonde did not always take the most immediate heir of a dead Kyungu to succeed him; during the middle period it is certain that they did not. The Kyungu had to be taken from the royal family but, within limits, the most suitable man might be chosen. And with the increase in the numbers of the chiefs the area of selection grew constantly wider. The constitutional methods of selection will be discussed in section five.

### (d) *THE MIDDLE KYUNGUS: CIVIL WARS.*

We must now turn to the rivalry between the chiefs of Ngelenge and Ngana. "Mwangonde begat Kalonga, Mpeta,[2] and Mwansele. And they, when they grew up, quarrelled with the sons of Kasyombe: 'Let them move further off, they are only commoners, we object to their proximity!' So they made war on them and drove them fleeing out of Ngana with only a few men. Before this war began their father Mwangonde had forbidden them to fight and commanded them to be friends." We notice here a point, which will be discussed later in section five, that the Kyungus, though not themselves involved in the civil wars, yet had little or no power to keep the peace. 173

"Then the sons of Kasyombe went to the Ndali to make allies of them and they returned together and fought the sons of Mwangonde

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[1] cf. Section 3.

[2] Mpeta (vide infra) later took the name of Mwakinyungulu.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17



even here it was rather position than area that was at stake: "We object to their proximity, let them move further off," said the chiefs of Ngelenge.

Civil wars varied in size and importance from little local fights between neighbouring villages, fiefs or chiefdoms to more extensive fights between groups or even whole houses of chiefs. And in every case the political organization took on, for the time, a military character. Great-commoners led their villagers to war, chiefs their great-commoners; the senior of a group of brother chiefs summoned his juniors to help him, while a great chief summoned all the local chiefs of his house. But only the Kyungu himself could summon the territorial nobles.

Now leadership in war is a factor of political authority; the great chiefs, nobles, chiefs and great-commoners derived part of their status from their military functions. But, on the other hand, it is equally true to say that it was the other factors of their status which enabled them to exercise this military authority.

In every war, for instance, there were religious elements. Chiefs had war medicines and prayed to their ancestors for success; while the loyalty of the great-commoners and people to their chief had both a spiritual and an economic importance. Sometimes, in peace, the leading commoners would dream of war and, if they dreamt of running away, then their chief would hastily kill meat for them. Such dreams were witchcraft and, unless promptly dealt with by a feast, were held to be a certain harbinger of future defeat.

"In civil warfare the Kyungu never took any part at all, he remained impartial at Mbande. His sons fought one another by themselves." (But what of the war, between Ngelenge and Ngana, did he not help his own sons in any way?) "No, he did not. For both 'the cousins' and 'the sons' alike were his children, he was the father of all."

### (b) *TRIBAL WAR.*

The procedure of tribal warfare and that of the occasional punitive expeditions against the Kyungu's subordinates was the same. Messages were sent by the *walakata* to all chiefs and nobles of the plain to come to Mbande. There the more important of them entered the Kyungu's house and were given their orders by him personally: "And then, when the Kyungu had told them whom to go and fight, he would finish up by saying 'That is all then, go away now and call down blessings on your arms.' So they would leave his house and gather all together, chiefs and their men, and pray."

The premier noble of Ngonde would begin, reciting all the names of the sacred groves of the Kyungu and asking each one to bless them in their fight. Then after him each great chief in turn would pray in like

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17



175 nga, one of the chiefs of Ng'elenge, Kyungu in his stead. "They deposed Mwabulambo because, as they said, the country was once more at peace and so they should take a son of Mwakasungula again as the Kyungu." Mwakabanga was at first installed on the lake shore, but after the death of Mlozi he moved to the traditional capital at the foot of Mbande.

175 177 The demarcation of the interterritorial boundary between Nyasaland and German East Africa (afterwards Tanganyika) cut across the area of Mbande's influence. The majority of the Lambya were separated by the boundary from their chiefs Nyondo and Kameme, while the Ndali who had, so it is said, previously sent regular tribute of ivory to Mbande, now became quite independent. And some of the more remote territorial nobles to the west were included in Northern Rhodesia.

One of the first acts of the new Government was to forbid the hunting of elephants without a license and thus at a blow the main traditional source of the Kyungu's revenue came to an end. Since then the numbers of elephants have been greatly reduced by European hunters, and only a few are left in the Ngonde of to-day. Taxes soon began to be collected, however, and small subsidies to be paid from them to selected chiefs and nobles.

175 178 Now Kyungu Mwakabanga, who died in 1904, after a reign of ten years, "was the first Kyungu to sit with his people judging their cases: he appeared before them at his own homestead. None of his predecessors had done so, only the nobles of Ngonde had seen them." During his reign the Government suppressed the *walakata*, on the ground that their methods were too rough, and gave him government-paid messengers instead. And it also forbade the poison-ordeal. [202]

After Mwakabanga's death the nobles of Ngonde chose Mwangalaba, a son of Malema, to succeed; and early in his reign there were other significant changes of custom. From his predecessors, as we have seen, when they journeyed through their country, all commoners save the very old had fled. The Kyungu was too terrible for ordinary men to look upon. "Not till the succession of Mwangalaba was this custom abandoned." And in the third year of his reign the custom of hoeing *milasa* lapsed, not to be revived till 1927.

Now, as it happened, Mwangalaba had a younger brother, Peter, who was a man of exceptional talents. Starting as a Christian teacher he then became a store capitao of the African Lakes Corporation and of various other firms, and later set up in business for himself with a chain of shops and made a fortune. And when Mwangalaba began to fail in 1912 Peter became his assistant and proved himself to have legal and administrative ability also. A failing Kyungu could not, as in former times, be killed and Mwangalaba lingered on until 1932. In 1927 it became necessary

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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boys tell all sorts of stories, especially about women, they discuss love-making and women, and tell tales of their own conquests. The younger ones listen to these things and that is all right in the boys' village, that is how we learn. But we compare in our minds and think that if a boy stays at home it is as if he listened to all this from his parents, and people always do talk lewdly at night; and that is very bad, that is foolishness.—But in the boys' village it is good for the young ones to listen, that is how children grow up."

On another occasion when I told this same man that in Europe many people thought it a good thing for boys to get sexual instruction from their parents and teachers he was shocked: "But I think it is impossible" he protested "for parents to go into detail with their children; there is too much shame on both sides. And if they did, it would damage the children's respect for them."

There is thus a correlation in this society between the age-village system at its genesis and the belief that a boy's dawning interest in sex must be informed, not by his parents, but by friends only a little older than himself.

Few men marry before twenty-five years of age, but affairs with girls begin before puberty. All affairs are related in detail to friends in the age-village, and the younger ones learn by listening; and they also learn when the older boys send them as messengers to the girls of their fancy.

Besides the more serious love affairs which are carried on in secret, groups of boys from the same age-village commonly flirt with any girls they meet on the way, and it is then that the incest taboos are learnt. If one of the boys is known to be related to one of the girls, either through a common grandfather or great-grandfather, his companions send him away: "Don't you see your sister is here? You cannot come!"

Contrary to a general belief about "primitive" societies, homosexual intercourse is common in the boys' villages, between close friends, but there is no real perversion; homosexuality is said to be always *faute de mieux*. The older men in discussion dismiss it with the tolerant word "adolescence," it is never continued after marriage, and all except the feeble-minded get married sooner or later.

But life in a boys' village also gives its members much information and wisdom unconnected with sex. There, as we have seen, boys perfect their skill in building, and there also they learn to argue and express themselves with adult fluency. It is characteristic of the Nyakyusa legal